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Approved For Release 1999/09/07 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200220032-7

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

U. 538,780

S. 661,622

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NOV 25 1965

McGeorge Bundy Gets The Silent Treatment By LBJ

By Douglas Kiker

N.Y. Herald Tribune Special

WASHINGTON — White House foreign affairs adviser McGeorge Bundy has sent President Johnson a memo informing him that he has received an offer to become president of the Ford Foundation. So far, the President's reaction has been total silence.

Informed sources said Bundy is waiting for the President to call him in "at his leisure" to talk about the matter.

Sources close to Mr. Johnson said, however, that "the next move is up to Mac."

Cat-And-Mouse Game

This is the current status of what official Washington considers one of the really great cat-and-mouse games played here in years.

Bundy was offered the \$75,000-a-year job to head the nation's wealthiest and most influential philanthropic organization early this month by its board chairman, John J. McCloy. His reply was that he would not know if he would be available until he had talked to Mr. Johnson.

The unstated implication that has been widely drawn is that the former Harvard undergraduate dean is desirous of knowing whether Mr. Johnson has any long-range plans to appoint him eventually to some higher post within the executive branch.

Both officially and unofficially, Bundy has maintained strict silence on the matter.

The impression he creates among his associates at the White House is that there is no need for a decision or response from the President.

Official And Unofficial
Officially, the Texas White House continued to maintain

its position that the affair must not be very serious since Bundy has not seen fit to bring the matter up for detailed discussion with the President.

Unofficially, Mr. Johnson is said to believe that anyone of Bundy's talents and capacities who has given five years to public service ought to have the right now to decide on his own best course for the future.

Apparently, the impression the President seeks to create is that he values Bundy greatly but his loss would not mean the end of the world.

Who would succeed him? His chief deputy, Robert Komer? His brother, Asst. Sec. of State William Bundy? White House press secretary Bill D. Moyers?

Komer is described officially as a "long-time government analyst," which means he has been used to work for the Central Intelligence Agency before he came to the White House.

White House sources said Mr. Johnson has been particularly impressed with Komer's handling of Israeli-Arab affairs and with his "sophisticated" appreciation of domestic politics.

But Komer lacks Bundy's prestige and would face a challenge in retaining the authority the office currently possesses.

Lively Prospect

William Bundy is considered a lively prospect. Mr. Johnson admires his talents and Bundy is said to admire the job.

Moyers. Some sources

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McGEORGE BUNDY

Mr. Johnson, conscious of criticism that he lacks sophistication in foreign affairs, would hesitate to replace Bundy with a Texan. Besides, Moyers is not to want the job.

Others say he does want it, but he would provide the "pipeline" the President needs between the White House and the agencies involved in foreign affairs, and that what he lacks in expertise he makes up for in intuition and presidential rapport.

No one believes Bundy has made a final decision; neither does anyone believe that he is making an out-and-out power play.

"He laid a card down, that's all," one source said.

It is widely assumed that Bundy would not object to being secretary of state one day. But people who know him say that he is not trying to force the President to give him that job tomorrow. Rather, it is some knowledge of Mr. Johnson's long-range intent he desires.

He Wants To Know

White House sources describe the relationship between the President and Bundy as "mutually respectful, proper, friendly but never buddy-buddy."

In the end, no one doubts that Bundy will stay in the White House.

Should Bundy leave the White House now, he will depart just as Mr. Johnson begins to turn more attention to U.S. relations with Western Europe, which is really Bundy's specialty.

Both West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson will visit the President in December, the French have a presidential election coming up, and the prospect of a visit by Mr. Johnson to Europe next spring seems almost certain.

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